partially covered by sand waves and sand ripples. The Side Scan Sonar deployed for the survey picked up images which indicate several geometric objects that are normally man made.

During subsequent surveys in November-December, 2001 various objects were picked up from the sea bed. Among the objects collected, the carbonized wood pieces were taken up for dating using C_{14} technique in the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeo Botany, Lucknow and in National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad. The preliminary results reveal that the age of the wood samples dated back to 7500 B.C. This has been further substantiated by dating carried out at laboratories in Germany.

These results and some of the objects collected were made public in a Press Conference on 16th January, 2002. Further detailed surveys, studies and investigations would need to be done in the area by multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional teams to conclusively establish the period of settlement.

(c) As a follow up, a workshop was organized on 1st July 2002 at NIOT campus, Chennai which was attended by about 50 eminent personalities belonging to different fields like archaeology, geology, geo-morphology, geo-chronology and marine technology. Based on the recommendations in the workshop, several organisations and institutions were asked to give proposal pertaining to the expertise that will be of importance to the gulf of Cambay marine archeological findings.

Statutory status for CRS

2466. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Commissioners of Railway Safety, who conduct inquiries into major rail accidents, cannot function independently and impartially, as they are dependent on the Ministry of Railways for all their important requirements, like office and residential accommodation, transport and other perks for their officers, as well as for submitting their findings on accidents to the Railway board;

(b) if so, the details of the review undertaken, if any, to ensure an independent statutory authority status for the Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety; and

(c) the comparative set up obtaining in some other countries like Britain, USA etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA): (a) The Commissioners of Railway Safety, whose one of the many functions is to conduct inquiries into serious rail accidents, are entitled to get infrastructure support *viz.* accommodation, transport, etc. from the Ministry of Railways. They are, however, independent of the Ministry of Railways as their budget, appointment, promotion, pay & allowances etc. are under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The facilities being provided by the Railways are as per the service conditions agreed by the Ministry of Railways. They function independently and impartially in conducting accident inquiries and finalising their reports.

The accident inquiry reports are finally submitted to the Ministry of Railways, as the Railway Board is the safety controlling authority and they examine and implement the accepted recommendations, made by the Commissioners.

(b) Railway Safety Review Committee (1998) has also supported the independent nature and status of the Commission of Railway Safety.

(c) In USA, National Transport Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent Federal agency charged with investigation in every major accident of all transportation sectors. In Britain, the functions of Railway Safety Inspectorate called the "Her Majesty's Safety Inspectorate" are broadly similar to that of Commission of Railway Safety in India.

Bifurcation and creating new railway zones

2467. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Supreme Court has directed to place before it, the basis of bifurcation and creating of seven new Railway Zones; and

(b) the basis of splitting of the existing zones?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANDARU DATTATRAYA) (a) Supreme Court had directed to place before it the material on the basis of which the Cabinet took the decision for creation of seven new zones.